

STATEMENT OF

General Lloyd J. Austin, III, U.S. Army

COMMANDER

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

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ON

THE POSTURE OF U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

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Introduction: We are in the midst of a transition in the Central Command Area of Responsibility (AOR). With volatility a defining feature of the region, United States Central Command remains a command postured to respond to military crises while at the same time working in tandem with regional partners and American diplomats to carry out U.S. strategy in the region. In Afghanistan, U.S. forces continue to support the largest coalition campaign in modern history to ensure it will not again become a haven from which violent extremist organizations can plan, rehearse and execute terrorist attacks. We also work with international partners, and across U.S. government and Combatant Command lines, to share information and posture our forces to inhibit the spread of these radical and violent organizations and rapidly respond to protect U.S. interests. USCENTCOM works closely with our fellow Combatant Commands to mitigate risk collaboratively across COCOM boundaries.

As we transition to Afghan-lead in accordance with NATO's Lisbon and Chicago agreements, each of the other 19 countries that comprise U.S. Central Command's Area of Responsibility across the Middle East and Central Asian States present both challenges and opportunities for our military-to-military relationships. The ongoing events of the Arab Awakening, blatant brutality by the Iranian-backed Syrian regime and the spillover effects of refugees and violence into neighboring countries, coupled with Iran's flagrant violation of United Nations security council resolutions, bellicose rhetoric and pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, and the persistent threat from both Shia (Iranian supported) and Sunni (Al Qaeda and its affiliates) violent extremists demand international attention.

These factors, compounded by the lack of forward progress on Middle East Peace and the movement toward a sustainable two-state solution and the serious economic challenges many nations in the region confront, require us to remain vigilant and be ready for turmoil in the months ahead. In fact, we are now at a point where a re-energized Middle East Peace effort could pay significant dividends in terms of regional security since the status quo benefits no one and violent extremists use the issue for their own purposes. It is essential that we maintain the viability of the Palestinian Authority as a partner for peace and security, and preserve the two-state solution.

As we look to the future direction of American foreign policy, three enduring factors will keep U.S. attention anchored in this region: the U.S. relationship with Israel and our other partner nations; oil and energy resources that fuel the global economy; and the persistent threat from violent extremist organizations. U.S. Central Command's approach – working in tandem with the State Department and other agencies through a whole of government approach – is to protect our interests using fewer military resources in an era of fiscal restraint and political change.

Operating Environment: Significant factors are currently shaping and changing the region.

The Arab Awakening will bring years of political and social changes as the demographic challenges of a burgeoning youth bulge collide with struggling economies. There will be additional pressure on governments to respond to popular interests. We recognize the Awakening is what it is and not necessarily what we hope it will be: it is first a flight from repression and may or may not result in an embrace of democratic principles. The future is not

foreseeable, but one thing is clear: America must remain deeply engaged in the region and fully utilize all tools of national power as a force for stability and prosperity.

Traditional regimes that held power for decades have been swept aside or are under siege, adding to the region's uncertain future. Modern communications and social media have the potential to both empower and endanger people. While they can enable users to better understand their social circumstances and provide ways to organize to improve them, they can also make people more vulnerable to manipulation by malevolent actors. The increasing role of our adversaries in cyberspace necessitates additional emphasis and urgency on a targeted expansion of our presence, influence, capabilities and the authorities necessary to maintain an advantage in cyberspace. Threat networks including those maintained by Iran are adjusting opportunistically, and are emboldened by regional developments – to include the Arab Spring and events such as those in Benghazi and Syria. These networks pursue a range of destabilizing activities that include but are not limited to the transfer of illicit arms, as well as the provision of financial, lethal, and material aid support to a range of malign actors seeking to undermine regional security. In our efforts to counter destabilizing extremists, our international and regional partnerships remain one of our greatest strengths, and most potent tools. Addressing these activities will require our continued engagement, reassurance and commitment to work with other nations against extremists' violent activities.

U.S. Central Command's operating environment is also influenced by the major and emerging powers bordering our region, by the increasing Sunni-Shia polarization, and by Iran's malign influence. U.S. government efforts led by State Department to develop more militarily capable

and confident partners in the region are advancing, and contributing significantly to enhancing our robust regional security architecture. There is also widespread attention on how the U.S. and NATO will remain involved in Afghanistan post-2014 to prevent its regression, and whether the U.S. will continue to remain resolute in the face of a growing Iranian threat. Finally, the threat of weapons of mass destruction is prevalent in the region, with both Syria and Iran possessing chemical weapons or the capability to produce them and Iran advancing its nuclear program. Pakistan has a fast growing nuclear arsenal and violent extremists continue to profess a desire to obtain and use weapons of mass destruction. This danger has our full attention.

Each country in my assigned region has its own unique history, culture, religions and ethnicities and we treat each country on its own merits. The value of American military-to-military relationships is evident when you compare the transition in Egypt with events in Libya and the ongoing brutality in Syria. Under immense pressure both internally and externally, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt oversaw the transition and transferred power to an elected government. Egyptian military leaders did not attempt to protect the old regime from its accountability to the people or seize power for themselves. Moreover, they demonstrated restraint and steady performance through difficult transition milestones including the appointment of new military leadership and the political upheaval following President Morsi's December constitutional decree. First and foremost, the military sees itself as the upholder of Egypt's sovereignty and national security. It has maintained its professionalism and validated our longstanding investment in strong military ties, sustaining the trust of the Egyptian people through a most tumultuous period. As this critically important country experiences significant

political change and confronts a dire economic situation, USCENTCOM will remain actively engaged with Egypt's military leadership.

Strategic Risks to U.S. Interests: The most serious strategic risks to U.S. national security interests in the Central region are:

Malign Iranian influence: Despite significant economic sanctions and increased diplomatic isolation within the global community, Iran continues to export instability and violence across the region and beyond. There are five main threats Iran continues to develop: the potential nuclear threat; counter maritime threat; theater ballistic missile threat; the Iranian Threat Network to include the Qods Force and its regional surrogates and proxies; and cyber-attack capabilities.

- **Potential nuclear threat.** Iran continues to expand its nuclear enrichment capabilities, which enable Iran to quickly produce weapons-grade nuclear material, should Tehran make that decision.
- **Counter Maritime threat.** Iran is improving its counter maritime capabilities (mines, small boats, cruise missiles, submarines) to threaten sea-lanes vital to the global economy. The occasionally provocative behavior of the Revolutionary Guard Navy is an issue with which we deal and we refine our operational approaches in sustaining our stabilizing maritime presence in the Persian Gulf.
- **Theater Ballistic Missiles.** Iran has the largest and most diverse ballistic missile arsenal in the Middle East and is increasing medium and short range ballistic missile inventories and capability with ranges up to about 2,000 kilometers, sufficient to strike targets with

increasing precision throughout the region. While Iran has previously exaggerated its capabilities, there is consensus that Tehran has creatively adapted foreign technology to increase the quality and quantity of its arsenal.

- **Iranian Threat Network.** Malign influence and activities (illicit weapons, financial aid, trained personnel and training) in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Gaza, Lebanon and Yemen along with the 2011 attempt here in Washington to assassinate the ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, indicate a long-term trend that has clear potential for murderous miscalculation that could spark a disastrous regional conflict. Iran continues to seek to establish nodes throughout the region through which to advance its destabilizing agenda.
- **Cyber.** Given Iran's growing capabilities in this sensitive domain, the U.S. must recognize and adapt now to defend against malicious cyber activity.

Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs): The focus of our military efforts over the past decade has largely been on Al Qaeda, its adherents and affiliates (AQAA), and we have achieved measurable successes in combating them. The AQAA "franchise" remains a threat however. An equally concerning long-term threat continues to emanate from the Iran-sponsored Shia brand of extremism wielded by groups such as Lebanese Hezbollah. In addition to the threat from these terrorists with which we are already familiar, a clash brought on by these two brands of extremism could pour fuel on the simmering Sunni-Shia tensions we observe from Baluchistan to Syria and incite a worsening cycle of violence.

State Security and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD): WMD proliferation and the potential loss of control of WMD by regional governments, for example the potential loss of

control of Syrian chemical weapons, pose a significant risk to the region and our most vital national security interests. The potential for WMD in the hands of non-state actors and extremist organizations cannot be addressed by traditional Cold War deterrence methods and presents a clear threat to our regional partners, innocent populations, and our forces and bases.

Afghanistan Stability and Security: While progress in Afghanistan is undeniable, progress and violence coexist. In accordance with NATO/ISAF's campaign plan, our sustained training, advising and assistance have led to a counterinsurgency-focused Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) that has now achieved full strength in numbers. Keeping our campaign on track requires close collaboration and reassurance to our Allies and Afghan partners to maintain the confidence of the largest wartime alliance in modern history and the Afghan people. That message of commitment will also reassure the Central Asian States, which are understandably sharply focused on 2014 and beyond. The present drawdown rate leaves the campaign on a sound footing for the Afghan forces to assume the lead with our advisory support and training.

Regional Instability: As savagery increases in Syria's civil war, the number of refugees fleeing the fighting continues to grow. The impacts on Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon are severe, with media reports of over 4 million internally displaced persons and the U.N. estimating over 900 thousand refugees in neighboring countries. Refugees into Jordan alone continue to increase by more than 50,000 monthly since the New Year. The potential destabilizing impact is clear and there is a growing likelihood of unpredictable longer-term effects on regional stability. Refugee camps are not a permanent solution, they have not proven to be economically viable, nor do they give hope to younger generations.

Perceived Lack of U.S. Commitment: Perhaps the greatest risk to U.S. interests in the region is a perceived lack of an enduring U.S. commitment to collective interests and the security of our regional partners. This impression, if not actively and often countered, and any lack of clarity regarding U.S. intentions in the region, particularly with respect to Afghanistan's future, Middle East Peace, and shaping an acceptable outcome in Syria, could reduce our partners' commitment to stand with us and leave space for other actors to assume less benign leadership roles. If we seek to influence events, we must listen to partner concerns and continue to demonstrate our support through tangible actions. Our regional partners want to share the security burden with us, and we should actively enable them to do so, especially as we face our own fiscal realities.

USCENTCOM's Approach: All of U.S. Central Command's military activities are firmly nested in four main drivers of U.S. foreign policy. First is security, and in particular, meeting the urgent challenges posed by Iran's reckless behavior across a wide front and being prepared to respond to a range of regional contingencies, as well as the related imperative of accelerating a transition to the new leadership which the Syrian people so deeply deserve. The second driver is our continued support for political openness, democratic reforms and successful post-revolutionary transitions. Third, no political transition or democratic reform process can succeed without a sense of economic opportunity. Fourth and finally, a re-energized effort is needed to resolve persistent regional conflicts, and especially for renewing hope for a two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians. Within this framework, USCENTCOM stands firmly alongside our friends and supports regional security, territorial integrity of sovereign nations, and the free flow of commerce.

CENTCOM's approach to protect the nation's interests in the Middle East is to work BY, WITH and THROUGH key regional partners to bolster regional security and promote stability, while minimizing a permanent U.S. military footprint. In so doing, we can build our partners' capacity to enable them to share in the security costs for the region.

USCENTCOM uses four principal levers as we engage in the region:

- **Military to Military Engagements:** These lay the foundation for and bolster our broader diplomatic relationships. Much of this work is ongoing, but as resources decrease and American forward presence in the region declines, mil-to-mil engagements and working by, with, and through our partners will become increasingly important. This type of *forward engagement* is often the bedrock of our most important relationships and builds the trust necessary to work closely together.
- **Plans and Operations:** USCENTCOM develops and executes plans and operations in close collaboration with our fellow Combatant Commands, interagency organizations and international partners as necessary to address developing contingencies and crises. While providing military options for the Commander-in-Chief, these plans are designed from the outset to be inclusive of regional and traditional partners.
- **Security Cooperation Programs:** Building partner capacity is the responsible way to reduce U.S. military presence and maintain the health of our force by partnering with regional nations to distribute more of the security burden. In order to build partner effectiveness, we must be more responsive to their capability needs while strategically aligning acquisition and training plans with regional collective security requirements. Combined training, multilateral exercises (resourced by OSD's Combatant Commanders'

Exercise Engagement and Training Transformation program), defense reviews and expanded professional military education exchanges are cost-effective means to enhance trust and interoperability while encouraging progress on rule of law and human rights issues. Once fully implemented, the Global Security Contingency Fund will offer us opportunities to respond to emerging security cooperation, assistance and requirements.

- **Posture and Presence:** A tailored, lighter footprint supported by access to infrastructure that enables rapid reinforcement is the foundational concept for future military posture in the region. The USCENTCOM military presence will continue to become more maritime in character, supported by expeditionary land forces and have strong air enablers. I anticipate the need to sustain maritime defense, anti-fast attack craft capabilities, amphibious ships and mine-countermeasure capability and Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance capabilities. I see the need for growth in our Counter Intelligence and Human Intelligence (HUMINT) capacities across the region. In summary, we will need strong strategic relationships with our partners to enable the presence required to deter adversaries and reassure our friends.

Around the Region: The Department of Defense carefully shapes military presence (U.S. and partners) in the Middle East to protect the global free flow of critical natural resources and to provide a counterbalance to Iran – a balanced force presence ready to respond to a variety of contingencies, and to deter Iranian aggression. To maintain a right-sized American security footprint in the Gulf, the U.S. promotes close teamwork with the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** states. By deepening strategic ties with the Gulf and improving the capability of the GCC states through multilateral exercises, security assistance and training, regional stability is

appropriately shown to be an international responsibility. The U.S. will continue to promote the capabilities of GCC partners in such missions as missile defense, maritime security, critical infrastructure protection and development of a common operating picture that allows us to work smoothly together when necessary.

During the past year, we have seen significant progress in our military relationship with countries of the GCC. In support of the efforts of the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense and the U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum, we have worked to enhance and deepen Ballistic Missile Defense cooperation in response to the proliferation of these weapons. We continue to emphasize U.S.-GCC multilateral exercises, such as our successful International Mine Countermeasure Exercise, which included participants from over 30 countries from five continents in 2012, and our Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) exercise LEADING EDGE 2013 ably hosted by UAE. The Gulf States have demonstrated the willingness to work with one another and with international partners to counter malign influence in the region and ensure freedom of commerce – a critical international issue in terms of the global economy.

Interoperability in this framework improves U.S. defense-in-depth and our own capabilities become more robust by supporting partner capacity and working by, with and through the GCC.

For decades, security cooperation has been a cornerstone of our relationship with the **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**. As we face ever more sophisticated regional challenges in the Middle East, helping to enable the upgrade of Saudi Arabia's defense capabilities sustains our strong military-to-military relations, improves operational interoperability, helps the Kingdom prepare to meet regional threats and safeguards the world's largest oil reserves. In difficult times, the Kingdom

has demonstrated its willingness and capability to use its military forces to fight as part of a coalition against regional threats. Sustaining the Saudi military capability deters hostile actors, increases U.S.-Saudi military interoperability and positively impacts the stability of the global economy. Working with Department of State, USCENTCOM helped establish the first interagency security assistance program to build the capabilities of the Ministry of Interior Security Forces that protect Saudi Arabia's critical infrastructure. This is a long-term \$1 billion FMS Interagency Technical Cooperation Agreement, which has shown remarkable progress.

A long term and strong ally in the region, **Kuwait** continues to build upon a long bi-lateral military relationship with its critical support for U.S. troops and equipment. Kuwait remains a valued partner and is steadily reconciling its long-standing issues with Iraq and supporting the region's stability. We enjoy excellent relations with the Kuwaiti military built on many years of trust between us since the liberation in 1991.

The **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** has been a valued partner through Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, Afghanistan and Libya. The Emirates participated in Operation Unified Protector in Libya, flying as part of NATO's effort and the Emiratis have increased the number of their troops and aircraft deployed to Afghanistan even as other nations are drawing down. The UAE is also a leader in the Gulf for air and missile defense capabilities. Their Foreign Military Sales purchases total \$18.1 billion and include the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system, valued at approximately \$3.5 billion, a highly capable and wholly defensive system that will contribute to regional stability and our interoperability. The UAE was the first foreign government to purchase this system. Their

many contributions to collective defense and their close military ties over decades mark UAE as one of our strongest friends within the region, deserving of our continued close engagement and tangible FMS support.

Qatar is taking an increasingly active role within the region, supporting operations in Libya with both military and humanitarian aid. Qatar continues to demonstrate leadership in its foreign policy, including spearheading an Arab League resolution suspending Syria's membership. Qatar has placed wide-ranging sanctions on Syria in response to the Assad regime's violence against its own citizens and has played a leading role in helping the Syrian opposition to improve its organization and capabilities. We enjoy excellent military relations with this country that has generously hosted several of our forward headquarters and facilities.

Home to our sole main naval operating base in the Middle East, **Bahrain** has been an important friend and partner for many decades, and provides key support for U.S. interests by hosting U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet and providing facilities for other U.S. Forces engaged in regional security. The strong U.S.-Bahrain relationship is particularly critical in the face of the threat Iran poses to regional stability. Over the past several years, Bahrain has faced internal challenges.

USCENTCOM works closely with others in the U.S. government to advance a message of support for dialogue and reform in Bahrain, which will be key to ensuring the country's stability and security. The United States supports Bahrain's National Dialogue and the government's ongoing efforts to implement recommendations from the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) report. We will continue to be a strong partner of Bahrain and the Bahraini people in the years ahead.

Oman is strategically located along the Strait of Hormuz and the Indian Ocean and has played a steady role and been a voice of moderation in the region for many years. We have a shared appreciation of the situation in the Gulf and Oman provides valued perspective for maintaining regional stability. We enjoy trusted military relations with the professional Omani Armed Forces and we are enhancing interoperability through exercises and Foreign Military Sales.

In the face of intense regional pressure and internal economic crisis, **Jordan** endures as one of our most dependable allies in the region. Political reform is clearly occurring even as the spillover of Syrian refugees severely impacts a challenging economic situation. Always a leader in the region, King Abdullah II continues to press forward with many political changes to strengthen Jordan's democratic processes. On the international front, he advocates for re-energizing the Middle East Peace. The Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) continue to provide strong leadership and perform admirably and professionally while stretched thin, and while continuing to deploy troops in support of ISAF in Afghanistan. The JAF provides protection and humanitarian relief to the tens of thousands of Syrian refugees who have fled to Jordan over the last two years. Our continued support for Jordan, including building the capacity of the JAF, has never been more critical. A stable and secure Jordan is a needed bulwark now more than ever.

Iraq remains at the geo-strategic center of the Middle East. Iraq is also the fourth largest Foreign Military Sales (FMS) partner in the region, and ninth in the world. As we work to develop a new strategic relationship with the Iraqi government, our desired end state is a sustained U.S.-Iraqi partnership in which Iraq becomes a proactive security partner with their neighbors in the region. A shared border with Iran is a reality as is the spillover of Syria's civil war that can

reignite sectarian violence in Iraq. Our military-to-military relationship forged in recent years is the foundation for developing the desired strategic partnership. U.S. security assistance and FMS are key tools for building and shaping Iraq's defense capabilities and integrating Iraqi security forces into the region, anchored by U.S. materiel and training. Recently convened Defense and Security Joint Coordination Committees have helped in this regard and USCENTCOM continues expanding security cooperation activities that deepen our military-to-military ties with Iraq, to include opening doors for Iraqis to participate in our regional exercises. Internally today, the security environment in Iraq continues to present significant challenges, and the United States is supporting the Government of Iraq's efforts to confront these threats. The imperfect political processes still keep most of the tensions from creating havoc. However, persistent Arab-Kurd tensions and increasing Sunni discontent – exacerbated by events in Syria and a sustained violent AQI threat – diminish their regional leadership potential as well as their internal stability. Now the world's third largest producer of oil and desirous of the needed stability for exporting its oil, Iraq's long term interests align more closely with its Arab neighbors in the GCC than with Iran. With our persistent efforts over time, Iraq could become a partner that is both a consumer and provider of security in the region.

Egypt remains one of the most important partners in the pursuit of regional peace and stability in USCENTCOM's theater of operations. They continue to support our over-flight permissions and Suez Canal transit courtesies and maintain a field hospital in Afghanistan in support of the NATO campaign. The Egyptian military is also deploying peacekeeping troops in Darfur, Sudan. The ceasefire agreement with Israel is holding and Israeli military leaders have noted that Gaza is quieter today than it has been in years. In the Sinai, the Egyptians are taking steps to

improve security by relocating border detection equipment to counter smuggling activities and establishing a National Agency for Development and Reconstruction. Further, their military has created quick response forces to improve security for the Multinational Force and Observers Force stationed in the Sinai, which includes around 600 U.S. troops. The political situation remains fluid thus heightening the potential for further changes, and this dynamic could place strains on the network of relations between Egypt and its neighbors that have historically been critical to the anticipation and mitigation of emergent crises. Additionally, the dire state of the Egyptian economy remains a cause of concern and a driver of internal dissent. Our relationship with the Egyptian senior military leadership remains on a firm footing characterized by candid and professional discussions. Our military assistance plays a major role in protecting our interests and is crucial to the modernization and interoperability of the Egyptian Armed Forces and USCENTCOM endorses its continued support without conditionality.

As the sole multi-confessional security institution in **Lebanon**, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is a unifying force and the principal governmental organization viewed positively by the Lebanese from all sectarian groups. In light of the ongoing situation in Syria, our various forms of aid to the LAF are vital to maintaining Lebanon's internal stability and helping to guard against the spillover violence from across the Syrian border. Our program providing military training and material support to the LAF has enabled them to be a more effective counter-balance to violent extremists within Lebanon. Our shared goal is to support the Lebanese government to be responsive to the peoples' needs while allowing the LAF to build into the principal security force in a country long abused by extremists and externally supported militias.

In **Yemen**, President Hadi has made important progress implementing the GCC-sponsored political transition agreement. He continues to exhibit sound leadership and a strong commitment to reform. To support the Yemeni government's implementation of the agreement, we are working closely with the Ministry of Defense to restructure and professionalize the military and security apparatus to effectively deal with critical national security threats. The economic situation, already degraded by a long period of unrest, remains vulnerable and poses a significant threat to stability. The security situation remains fragile due to the threats posed by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Iran's destabilizing activities. We continue our support to the national unity government to reduce the opportunity for violent extremists to hold terrain, challenge the elected government, or conduct operations against U.S. interests in the region or the homeland.

As the crisis in **Syria** enters its third year, there is little evidence to suggest the conflict's end is imminent. Russia and China's regrettable vetoes in the U.N. and Iran and Hezbollah's full support have helped the Assad regime to remain defiant in the face of international condemnation. The regime has shown a growing willingness to escalate violence in pursuit of its goal to retain power at all costs. The regime's use of ballistic missiles since December 2012 perhaps best illustrates this point: Over 80 of these largely inaccurate but highly destructive weapons have been launched thus far, with little regard for collateral civilian population casualties. The regime has used almost every conventional weapon in its arsenal and we maintain a constant watch for any employment of its chemical and biological weapons (CBW). As the conflict spreads, potentially threatening the security of the regime's CBW stockpile, it will be increasingly difficult to track the vulnerability and status of these weapons.

The conflict has already resulted in an unprecedented level of violence, with the United Nations assessing more than 70,000 dead and nearly one million refugees fleeing the bloodshed (as of mid-Feb 2013). Despite tangible gains by the opposition, the Syrian military maintains its core capabilities – including ground forces, special operations forces, air forces, integrated air defense systems (IADS), and theater ballistic missiles (TBMs). Moreover, while the opposition has inflicted significant losses on Syria’s military and eroded Assad’s control over many parts of the country, the regime has responded with paramilitary operations assisted by sustained Iranian financial and lethal support. Hezbollah is now heavily committed as a critical partner of the Syrian regime, providing training and oversight to the Shabiha militia in conjunction with Iranian support. This cooperation between Syria, Iran and Hezbollah stands in contrast to the relative disunity of the Syrian Opposition – which is further encumbered by the malign influence of Al Nusrah/AQ-related groups.

In **Pakistan** we face a confluence of issues that challenge the Pakistan government and our ability to provide assistance. The political and security environment in Pakistan is impacted by terrorist attacks and ethno-sectarianism and a civilian government with tenuous control in parts of the country, radicalization of segments of the population, overstretched military, strained relationships with neighbors, and dealing with frequent natural disasters. The United States has a vested interest in Pakistan’s sustainability as a nation and despite challenges in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, they are an important regional partner that has sacrificed greatly in the war on terror. They must play a constructive role if Afghanistan is to achieve long-term stability.

The U.S.-Pakistan relationship in 2012 began at a low point as Pakistan maintained the closure of the U.S./ISAF ground lines of communication (GLOC) to Afghanistan in response to the tragic November 2011 incident at Salala. The relationship has steadily improved since the GLOC reopened in July 2012 when we resumed security cooperation with Pakistan's Army and concluded an agreement that permits two-way flow on the GLOC. We also concluded a tripartite U.S.-Pakistan-Afghanistan agreement to facilitate better coordination and complementary operations on both sides of the border that disrupt the enemies' freedom of movement and help prevent another fratricide incident. In December, we held our first high-level bilateral Defense Consultative Group in more than 18 months. We resumed strategic-level talks and committed to implement a framework for defense cooperation that promotes peace and stability within the region, based on areas of converging interests and principles of mutual respect and transparency. Subsequently, we have held operational level talks, including through the recent Defense Resourcing Conference and Military Consultative Committee, which focused on synchronization of our efforts to build Pakistan's capabilities to achieve our common objectives. Continued support for Foreign Military Financing, International Military Education and Training, and the Coalition Support Fund will provide the necessary tools to keep our military-to-military relationship on a solid footing.

In **Afghanistan**, ISAF operations and an increasingly capable ANSF have degraded the enemy's capability. The counterinsurgency campaign has made gains and created space for the Afghan government to continue to make progress toward long-term stability after thirty-plus years of war. Transition of security responsibilities from ISAF to the ANSF continues. Tranche 4 has been announced and will soon move into the Transition Phase, after which 87% of the population

will be in areas secured by the ANSF. To that end, ANSF units are demonstrating increasing confidence and capability. As the ANSF assumes full security lead, the Coalition will continue its transition to a security force assistance (SFA) role. These SFA Teams (SFATs) will focus not only on the Afghan National Army (ANA) maneuver units and the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP), but will also work to develop a greater level of autonomy for key higher headquarters, district and provincial level components within the ANSF. With sustained U.S. and international support, in accordance with NATO's Lisbon and Chicago decisions, the ANSF will have the capability to prevent the return of terrorist safe havens and prevent a Taliban re-emergence as a dominant force.

However, our mission is not yet complete and our hard-fought gains must be strengthened. As the final tranches of security transition are implemented, Afghanistan will undergo three critical transitions: the assumption of full security lead by the ANSF, elections in the spring of 2014 with the transfer of authority to a new Afghan administration, and the redeployment of the majority of ISAF forces. The success of these transitions relies on continued financial support from the international community, particularly for training, advising and equipping the ANSF. In the current context of global fiscal austerity, demonstrated U.S. leadership through continued support of Afghanistan will be critical to maintaining Coalition cohesion. I greatly appreciate your support for the Afghan Security Forces Fund, which will continue to be a necessity through 2018. Not supporting the ANSF will greatly limit our ability to prevent the return of terrorist safe havens and a Taliban resurgence that threatens the Afghan Government. Our enemies are hedging and contemplating whether the opportunity will arise for them to pursue their agendas. Specific tools such as the Commander's Emergency Response Program, Lift and Sustain,

Coalition Support Funds, Coalition Readiness Support Program and the Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund need your support if we are to achieve a successful transition.

The **Central Asian States** remain key supporting partners for our Afghanistan Strategic Partnership and are concerned about U.S. long-term engagement with the region. They share our priority to maintain security in the region after the transition in Afghanistan. As we transition, maintaining access to the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) for logistical resupply of the Afghan campaign and retrograde operations is of particular importance as we seek to promote stability and assure our partners of our continued commitment to the region. The development of the NDN has been a critical investment to that end and cooperation with our Central Asian partners will continue post-2014. Solidifying international support for the New Silk Road initiative, now and after the drawdown in Afghanistan, will increase economic development, contribute to stability across Central Asia, and may help mitigate the impact of a potential economic vacuum that illicit industries might otherwise fill. Coupled with our NDN efforts, USCENTCOM will continue to provide military assistance focused on building partner capacity and capabilities to combat terrorists and counter illegal trafficking in all its forms. In addition, we will work closely with several of our willing partners who are committed to developing deployable peacekeeping units. Programs and authorities such as Section 1206 (Global Train and Equip Fund) and the new Global Security Contingency Fund, together with the National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP) represent cost-effective means for the United States to respond to emerging opportunities for building partner capacity.

Our relationship with **Kazakhstan** continues to mature from one of security assistance to a security partnership. In November 2012, we signed a Five-Year Military Cooperation Plan (2013-2017) and a Three-Year Plan of Cooperation in support of Kazakhstan's Partnership for Peace Training Center. Both agreements will assist Kazakhstan in realizing its objective to deploy a company-sized unit in support of a United Nations peacekeeping operation by 2015. Towards this end, Kazakhstan will undergo a NATO peacekeeping evaluation and certification process at STEPPE EAGLE, a peacekeeping exercise co-sponsored by Kazakhstan and the U.S. scheduled for August 2013. Kazakhstan remains a force for stability within the region and supports our efforts in Afghanistan through facilitation of the NDN.

Kyrgyzstan continues to be a key partner for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and the region. Our military relationship continues to improve, particularly in the areas of regional security and military security cooperation. Kyrgyzstan aims to deploy a U.S.-trained peacekeeping mission within the next two years. The Kyrgyz provision of general access and over flight and use of the Manas Transit Center remain key factors for successful operations in Afghanistan.

For **Tajikistan**, building and maintaining counter-terrorism, border security and counter-narcotics capability to protect our mutual interests from the threat of VEOs are important for regional stability. In concert with our counter-terrorism efforts, we are working with Tajikistan to improve disaster response capabilities. Tajikistan is committed to deploying their U.S.-trained peacekeeping battalion on a United Nations peacekeeping mission in 2014. We continue to use the transit routes along the Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan (KKT) route of the NDN and explore options to facilitate the transit of goods and access in the event of a crisis.

Turkmenistan's policy of positive neutrality governs the shape and pace of our security assistance relationship. This is illustrated in their preference for non-military, non-alliance exchanges, such as those hosted by the George C. Marshall Center and Near East Asia Center for Strategic Studies on broad, multilateral topics. Our bi-lateral security assistance relationship has seen modest growth focused on building their Caspian Sea and border security capacity.

Our relationship with **Uzbekistan** continues to improve in a deliberate, balanced way driven by our common regional security concerns and expansion of the NDN. Security cooperation provides increased opportunity for engagement. The bilateral agreements signed in 2012 are now being implemented and are beginning to produce important capabilities that support our campaign in Afghanistan. In November 2012, we conducted our first Bilateral Defense Consultations, serving to focus and strengthen our military cooperation toward security threats of mutual concern. We expect cooperation with Uzbekistan to continue to progress.

Required Capabilities: America faces hard fiscal realities and the Defense Department is undergoing a period of transition adapting to decreased budgets. U.S. Central Command, along with the rest of DoD and the interagency, will do less with less, but we will not do it less well. CENTCOM will remain tenacious stewards of taxpayer resources as we seek to develop and employ innovative ways and means to achieve our ends.

It is vitally important to invest in relationship development and expand the capacity and capability of our regional partners. To accomplish this, we must adapt USCENTCOM's presence and Regional Security Cooperation through strategic reposturing of our forces and by

providing these forces with the necessary support. We also work to maintain access and presence that provide both crisis response and pre-positioning of critical combat assets and equipment should the need for reinforcements arise. Finally, we need to maintain robust international training opportunities in U.S. schools for their officers as well as multinational exercises as we work to promote regional security and stability by, with and through our partners.

As the war in Afghanistan draws down and our presence reduces, it becomes increasingly important to cultivate strategic partnerships that enable sustained stability. We will need to continue to leverage combined training with our partners and build coalition integration for long-term security in the region. USCENTCOM's exercise and engagement program will enable critical mission rehearsals with partners across the entire military spectrum of operations – reducing the risk of denied access while enhancing interoperability with our partners and creating mutual awareness. This approach will build confidence and enable lower cost mil-to-mil engagement and training activities.

Reposturing for the future, our enduring locations and projects support both a steady state and surge basing capacity, air-refueling, air operations, command and control, and special operations missions to preserve freedom of movement and strategic reach. Our presence also serves to demonstrate U.S. commitment to our allies, partners and foes. Our partners, in turn, provide locations that support critical access for current and future contingency operations while improving their forces and building interoperability with USCENTCOM.

The Iranian Threat Network and Ballistic Missile capability continue to pose a great threat in the region. These threats are expanding in quantity and quality and our focus on the nuclear threat will not divert our attention from the larger issues related to Iran's malign influence, as demonstrated through Lebanese Hezbollah and others of their ilk who are working with Iran's support to destabilize the region. Given Iran's intent to drive us out of the region, to undercut our partners, and its stated threats to disrupt international oil trade, our commitment and reassurance to our regional partners and allies have become the lynchpins to regional security and stability. Our efforts to advance regional integrated air and missile defense help foster U.S. and GCC coordination and advances GCC capabilities in this area. This also reduces risk to U.S. and partner deterrence and response capabilities and preserves freedom of movement. Iran's bombastic threats against the Strait of Hormuz, support for violent proxies and demonstrated military capabilities make the goal of enhancing GCC-wide missile defense capabilities and strengthening collaboration with our forces all the more important.

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) continue to be the most persistent and lethal weapon confronting our forces, those of our partner nations, and local populaces throughout the Area of Responsibility with an average of 172 incidents per month over the past two years, principally but not solely in Afghanistan. We continue to execute a comprehensive program with the keenly focused Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) to deter and defeat the IED threat in the region and we appreciate Congress' counter-homemade explosives legislation provision.

Our strategic communications and information operations programs provide non-lethal tools to disrupt terrorist recruitment and propaganda within the region. In terms of both outcomes and cost, these programs are highly-effective complementary activities vital to our strategy in the region: they allow us to exert presence, even while our combat forces in the region are reducing. They provide the human socio-cultural data, media analysis, internet video products, and multi-media campaign that include attributable social media and the Regional Web Interaction program (RWIP) to counter current and future threats. They also enable the dissemination of regionally focused information that counters violent extremist ideology and propaganda, amplifies moderate voices within the region, and degrades adversary dominance of the information domain.

These relatively inexpensive activities support interagency efforts to counter violent extremist ideology and diminish the drivers of violence that Al Qaeda and other terrorists exploit. To make this supportable across the Defense enterprise requires an enduring funding mechanism that DOD and our partners can rely on. Episodic engagement is inefficient and has the potential to create animosity due to unmet expectations by the governments and populations we are trying to support. Over the long-run, these proactive activities reduce strategic risk, protect American lives, and reduce the need for expensive responses to terrorist attacks. We seek your support to sustain and expand these efforts.

As I travel throughout the AOR and see the promise of new initiatives and the risk posed by numerous challenges, I receive requests from military leaders across the region to increase intelligence sharing between our militaries. Many show determination to make tough decisions

and prioritize limited resources to oppose antagonists seeking to destabilize their countries or use them to plan and stage attacks against the U.S. homeland. With this in mind, and in order to demonstrate our commitment, I requested the Intelligence Community to begin drafting releasable products for our most trusted partners in the Levant, on the Arabian Peninsula, in the Central Asian States, and in South Asia as a standard practice rather than the exception.

I am encouraged by the personal attention the Office of the Director of National Intelligence is giving these matters. Director Clapper's strong emphasis and encouragement for the intelligence community to produce intelligence in a manner that eases our ability to responsibly share information with our military counterparts creates a stronger, more focused front against our common enemies and builds our partner nations' confidence. We are grateful for the nimble manner in which our intelligence community has strengthened our efforts to checkmate more of our enemy's designs.

Conclusion: Thank you for your continued support to U.S. Central Command and to our troops engaged across the region. I recognize the difficult choices you must make as we confront fiscal realities. We continue to prioritize our needs based on our most critical requirements as we rebalance our approach to work by, with and through our partners while continuing to build partner capacity and reduce our expenditures.

As a Geographic Combatant Commander, the negative impact of a yearlong continuing resolution and/or sequestration would severely undercut the coherence of our efforts. As conveyed in recent testimony by DepSecDef Carter before this committee, "The consequences of

sequestration and lowering of discretionary caps are serious and far-reaching. In the near-term, reductions would create [are creating] an immediate crisis in military readiness, especially if coupled with an extension of the Continuing Resolution under which we currently operate. In the long-term, failure to replace large arbitrary budget cuts with sensible and balanced deficit reduction require this nation to change its defense strategy.” The Department continues to protect operations and priority activities in high threat areas, which will result in less initial impact on my current operations. However, impacts on readiness, investments and the civilian workforce are certain as well as other areas that are necessary to support our national security strategy and maintain options for the President. USCENTCOM will weather the challenges we face in the short term. We absorbed reductions in FY12 and will do our part to reduce spending this year as well. We prioritize our needs based on our most critical requirements as we balance our approach to work by, with and through our partners. Looking ahead, USCENTCOM will do its best to do what is required to protect U.S. national security interests in a region undergoing social and political change and in the face of declining resources for our own defense.